



Memory- the ability to recall past events. It is a simple, yet vital capability that we all take for granted; one that could be easily taken away from us or altered in an instant.

I

Beep...beep...beep...

I slowly opened my eyes to glaring lights overhead, like bright suns just an arms-

length away. My eyes stung as they struggled to adjust from the eternal darkness. My temples throbbed and every part of my body ached. I slowly began to move; pain rushed to every nerve in my body. I wailed in agony in an attempted to subdue the pain.

Slowly, I began to piece together my surroundings. A could see machinery and monitors of all types filed along each side of the cramped room I was in. They each showed a different image- some on X-rays, some of wavering numbers. Each one had a distinct sound, all in a discordant harmony.

I gingerly lifted myself up, despite the pain. I could see that something was peculiar about this place. It eerily resembled a nightmare I once had- or maybe it was deja vu. There was a voice in the back of my mind telling me to get out of there and to stay vigilant.

I stumbled towards the door, my bare feet pacing over cold, glistening tiles. But I stopped myself. I had been in so much torment that I did not realize a major problem. I did not remember what had caused me to end up in this unusual setting. This one thought lead to a million questions, but the last one was striking.

Who was I?...

“Did you put him in solitary? I don’t want him escaping. We can’t afford to loose him again,” called a deep mysterious voice.

“Yes, Sir,” he responded with as he stood at attention, “It’s all taken care of. He is unconscious and is waiting in the infirmary.”

“Excellent. Lets proceed with the plan. Follow me.”

The two slowly paced down the dark, damp corridor. They veered left and continued on until they arrived at a small, hidden room.

The door was slightly ajar and there was a monotonous buzz of broken electronics humming in the background. The soldier peered his head into the room, carefully examining its content. At that moment, he felt a qualm in the pit of his stomach. His mouth went agape and a look of sheer awe registered on his face. Nervously, he turned around, locking eyes with the dark figure.

“Haddix, Sir?” he began, “It appears that our captive has...well...take a look for yourself.”

Haddix observed the empty, lifeless room. He turned around and grinned. “Well, lets just say...”

He unholstered a pistol and and pulled the trigger.

“You’re fired.”

He kicked the door in frustration and screamed. Stomping down the hall, he whipped out a walkie-talkie and barked, “Code Red! Code Red! Our John Doe has escaped! Lock down all exits!”



It was impossible to navigate the dim, depressing labyrinth of tunnels and corridors. Every turn revealed a dead end or a locked door. The more I ran, the less uncertain I became of my exact location.

I heard footsteps pounding in the distance, getting closer with each waking moment. Sirens wailed and the words “CODE RED. JOHN DOE ON THE MOVE” blared from an intercom system. I knew if I did not find an escape route, the people who brought me here would take me back.

As I ran, I perceived a familiar sound in the distance, a *rattle* followed by a *whoosh*. Without thinking, I sprinted towards it.

My field of view clouded with a chance of escape, I crossed paths with an apparition of a man, his rushed expression telling me he was intensely searching for someone, probably me. He looked up, his ember red eyes burned his way through my soul, slowly charring my will to leave this accursed place alive. To the average person, this may have set them ablaze in sheer terror, but my will was stone hard, resistant to any

flame that may have tried to burn me. I locked eyes with him, petrifying him dead in his tracks. As the tension grew, I realized that at the moment we broke, it would be the the only chance I would have to escape.

Snapping out of the daze, I continued my attempted to achieve my current objective- to get out of here alive. I bolted off and swung open the next door I came across. I slammed it behind me and didn't look back. I followed the annex and ascended up the flight of stairs that it lead me to.

Hoping this would be the last door separating me from my freedom, I turned the knob and opened it. A slight grin appeared on my face as the familiar sounds became clear. I was in Penn Station, and the sounds were the trains in the subway terminals. Trying to blend in, I exited Madison Square Garden and walked among the New York City crowd.



While walking among the hustle and bustle of the Manhattan, I bumped into a suspicious figure, wearing all black and shades. In frustratiion, I cussed at him. He turned around, grabbed me, and shoved me against the wall.

"What's your problem?!" I yelled as I regained my footing. I took a defensive stance as I waited for a response.

He just stood there. Already in a bad mood, I didn't have time for this guy's nonsense. I gave him a right hook in the jaw. He staggered to the ground. There was a trickle of blood dripping from his mouth.

"I said ***whats your problem?!'***" I was beginning to think this guy just wanted to instigate a fight.

"You'll do," the man said as he stood back up, "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Agent Colfer. I work for the FBI. We've been watching you for some time and I wanted to see whether or not you were what they told me you'd be like. I admit my method of testing you is somewhat unorthodox but I needed to be sure that you was tough as they said you were. I can't tell you how many times we spent our time looking for someone who can talk the talk but can't walk the walk if you know what I mean. You have potential. Are you interested?"

"What exactly do you have in mind?" I asked.

He explained that I would be in a covert operation in which I would gather information about the SOS terrorist network. He said that they were planning something big but they were unsure of what exactly.

“Sure. But will I get paid?” I jokingly asked.

“Meet me at the Manhattan Heliport tomorrow at 5:00. We’ll discuss that later and we’ll give you your first assignment.” He smiled and began to walk towards the crowd.

“Wait! Before you go. I go by the name John. John Doe,” I yelled.

“Noted,” he said as he disappeared.

IV

Haddix sat in his leather recliner as he fiddled with his laser pointer, pondering how he could allow such a failure to occur. He realized that without him, his whole plan was in jeopardy. He turned his chair around to face the expensive, granite conference table. Acrossed sat a man fashioning a black suit. His eyes were shielded by his aviator shades. He seemed to have a lot on his mind; only mustering enough focus to stay attentive.

Haddix began, “Rumor has it that you have a lot of experience in your field. Am I not mistaken?”

The man responded, “Yes. I can do what you want, if you are willing to pay up...” He had a slight British accent, which ironically, added to his shady persona.

“Deal. Whatever you want. I just want him alive. Not dead- ALIVE. Do I make myself clear?”

He grinned and nodded.

“Here is your mission,” Haddix said. He handed him a folder with the SOS insignia on it- a green and black snake wrapping itself.

The man picked up the folder and carefully perused through its contents. He seemed unsatisfied with the prospect of returning with the infidel alive. He made certain he would kill him, just for the thrill. He had no intention of playing by the rules, and no intention of making any allies.

“Now how should I refer to you?” asked Haddix.

“Scar,” he said plainly. He opened the door and walked through the threshold, loading his handgun.

V

The sky was a bleak gray and the air was bitterly cold. The only sign of life in the desolate tarmac was a single black helicopter. The ghostly silence made things that much more ominous. Apparently, the city that never sleeps was taking a nap.

I paced down the runway, unsure of what to expect. The closer I got, the more I second-guessed myself. How did I get myself into this.....

“Glad you could make it. We’re going to the Pentagon. Once there, you and I are going to meet an agent that has been tracking the leader of the SOS, a man going by the name of Haddix, for the last 3 years. Hopefully, he could help us with our search. Are you comfortable with flying?” Colfer asked.

“Ummm sure, I guess. Lets go...” I said. I hopped into the chopper and snapped on my safety harness. I adjusted the headset that they had allotted me. Feeling paranoid, I grabbed onto the railing.

Whoosh...whoosh...whoosh...

We lifted up with a jolt. The helicopter quickly gained altitude, and before long, we began to hover over the New York skyline.

“So why me?” I asked, “I mean there are a lot of people in the Big Apple.”

“Well, don’t take this the wrong way, but we’ve been following you for a while. We know what you are capable of....” Colfer began.

I stopped him there. I explained what had happened immediately before he found me and how I had not recollection of the events prior to the incident.

“We figured this would happen. You see before the ‘incident’ , you were an undercover cop. You were on an undercover mission and...lets just say, things went horribly wrong.” Colfer responded with.

I was about to interject when I caught something out of the corner of my eye. Peering at

a passing building, I saw the silhouette of a man holding, what seemed to be, a rocket launcher.

Scar walked through Rockefeller Center. He admired the architecture of Manhattan; it was very different that the cityscape of London, his hometown. He knew that he had to stay on task. After all, this is what he was getting paid for.

He walked up the stairs of the iconic 30 Rock building, lugging a heavy briefcase up the stairwell. It was still early and no one was in the building, at least no one that would cause any trouble. He carefully eluded the security guards, which was anything but difficult considering the guard on duty fell asleep by the door to the observation deck.

He gingerly walked around him, being careful not to wake him. He carefully unlatched the latch and scaled up to the "Top of the Rock".

Being as discreet as possible, he took of his back pack and assemble a firearm closely resembling an RPG. He loaded the rocket into the weapon and took aim. A 6-inch everlasting scar spanned over his left eye, lined up perfectly with the iron sights.

"Here you go, you whirlybird, " he said as he slyly grinned. He pulled the trigger.

VI

As the next few minutes unfolded, everything began to slow down. First there was a bang, followed by and explosion of fire. The rotors drastically slowed. Parts of the helicopter plummeted down to the city below. An array of buttons started to flash in the

cockpit and all of the dials went to 0. We began to descend at an accelerated pace, falling faster and faster towards the Hudson River.

“Mayday! Mayday! Were going down!” the pilot began to scream into his headset.

Without hesitation, I grabbed the nearest parachute and readied myself to leap. I looked back to see Colfer incapacitated, his body unconscious and bleeding heavily. I thought about the second chance at life he was giving me. Grabbing Colfer, I jumped out of the wrecked chopper and pulled the cable. My parachute deployed and we landed in the water beneath. I sighed in relief. I did not want to die today. I still had so many questions.

The chopper, along with its pilot, met their inevitable fate. Spinning chaotically, it spiraled to a watery grave.

Scar witnessed his bidding take his course. He hit the chopper just below its rotors. At the moment of impact, he knew that he had succeeded. He quickly dispatched and concealed his weapon and briskly departed the scene, being careful to remain incognito.

On the way out, he nudged against someone. He looked back and realized it was an NYPD officer. The officer suspiciously took a quick glance at him. This was enough to prompt Scar to run, in fear of being caught. The officer shrugged and continued his patrol.

This had better be worth it. That bloke better pay up.

He hailed a taxi and drove off, leaving any sort of evidence of his crime in the dust.

VII

It was difficult enough to tread against the flow of water; the added weight of my colleague made it nearly impossible. I tried to keep our heads above the water but my efforts began to prove fruitless. After hours on end of fighting the current, my body finally said enough and gave out. I blacked out at the worst possible time.

I regained consciousness, only to find myself floating in the middle of nowhere. I had no idea how long I had been out. All I knew was that it was long enough to drift me somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. As if on cue, a large vessel floated in our direction. I tried to make myself visible, using every last bit of strength. It changed its

course and gradually turned our direction.

It pulled up along side us and a rope ladder swung out of the starboard side. I mustered enough willpower to scale the wooded rungs, being careful not to sway to far in either direction. The moment I crawled on the deck, I sprawled myself out and gasped for air.

What seemed to be a deckhand, took Colfer's limp body down below the deck of the of the yacht. This somewhat alarmed me but I was too exhausted to even make an attempt to stop him. I just lied there motionless, gradually regenerating my stamina.

An ominous figure walked towards me, shrouded by the dense fog. His voice called out to me, breaking the deathly silence that crept among the us. His voice sounded vaguely familiar; the kind of voice that once you hear, you never forget.

He said to me," Ahh. So, here we are, once again, on my ornate yacht. I can't remember the last time we met in such a way. It used to be the only time we saw each other. It was actually kind of pathetic. You used to try to kill me, saying it was your job, and the same thing would always happen. You know, you would sneak on deck, find your way to my quarters, and attempt to take me out. I would never be there...I'm not that stupid...it would always be a trap. You would take a few of my men and scamper off like the vermin you are. This time is different. You see, I have your "friend" down there, barely clinging to life after days at sea. Now, you can go if you want, I have no interest in killing you. Actually, I would prefer you to be alive. No one likes to kill anyone...but sometimes...it has to be done."

I gave him a glare, a look that clearly defined what I was thinking, which was extremely obvious. Something along the lines of "Yea....ok....sure....whatever you say."

After that, he went below deck where I had a feeling Colfer would be waiting. I couldn't help but thinking that this was one of those times where "it had to be done".

Using sheer will power, I stumbled up, using the guardrail to bolster me, noting the attributes of the deck, such as a black jet ski, I unsheathed a 6 inch knife that I had with me, the knife I had been carrying since I escaped the "labyrinth". After thinking about what I had to lose, which ironically was nothing, I only had one thought.

Let's go.

VIII

I infiltrated the bulky doors by simply kicking them in. Because of my not-so-discrete entrance, I was faced with a barrage of bullets, each one barely missing me. I dove behind a plush sofa. The figures henchmen did the same, each one used the adjacent sofa as a barricade. They were blocking the stairwell to ascend to the next level. I had virtually no escape.

I did something that I would later describe as utterly stupid. I leaped over the leather couch, barely nicking the wood frameworks of the piece of furniture. Using the glass coffee table as a stepping stone, I jumped up and stabbed each one, making each kill as clean as possible. No need to let the others know that I survived.

Picking up their weapons and ammunition, I proceeded to use more covert methods, trying to keep as quiet as possible. Luckily the pistol I scavenged had a silencer; that would make thinks a lot easier- and much quieter.

I scaled each level, taking out everyone in my path, the majority of them unable to unholster there weapons as I swiftly pulled the trigger. Over time, I began to develop some sort of “rhythm”; shoot, take cover, repeat. This worked until I reached the the captain’s quarters, where they were expecting me.

Two guards-each one holding an assault rifle, sights fixated on my skull.

I raised my hands in submission, knowing there was no possible way to make any rash attempts to escape, at least with my life. Bowing my head, I knelt down as my final act of surrender.

As the guards rushed over, restraints in hand, prepared to apprehend me, I heard two distinct shots of gunfire. I tentatively raised my head, only to find a man with a scar crossing over his left eye, holding a forty-five.

"What was that for? I don't even know you," I questioned as I stood up.

"Well allow me to introduce myself. They call me Scar. I am going to be straightforward with you. Remember your "helicopter incident?" Well, lets just say that I had something to do with that. But I had a recent change of heart. I'm on your side now. We share a common enemy," he explained.

"Wait. You tried to kill me? So you worked for Haddix? How can I trust you?" I suspiciously asked.

"The bloke never paid. Now come on. We've got a timetable to keep." he continued. And with that, he kicked in the door to reveal a small hallway with a steel door at its end. I knew that if Colfer was not here, he was dead.

I gingerly pulled the door handle to find Colfer laying on a silver operating table, blood oozing from the gashes on his forehead and his legs. His groans clearly defined that he was in pain, and his condition could not get any worse.

He looked at me intently and began to speak softly.

"Listen. I never got to finish what I was saying on the chopper. I haven't got much time left so now seemed like a good time to finish. Your last mission was to kill Haddix, but he incapacitated you before you had the chance causing you to lose your memory. Haddix has been intriguing to blow up the Empire State Building. You are just getting in his way. Stop him before he has the chance to kill anyone."

His voice trailed off. His head fell to the left and his breathing became sparse. I knew this was going to be the last time that I ever got to talk to him so I asked him, "Wait...Who am I?"

"Michael Wolfe," he croaked as he took his last breath. His lifeless, pale corpse laying still as we looked away

I turned around and began walking Scar closely behind. In anger, I walked towards the exit, taking my anger out on the nearest object, a distressed guard cowering in fear behind an ottoman. A right hook to his jaw, stopped his quivering as he scurried off.

I jumped on the jet ski, started the engine, and took off, preceding Scar on his jet ski.

We hovered over the murky water, making way back towards the city. We couldn't have floated that far. While riding, I noticed that we did not encounter Haddix after he had appeared to me. There was only one place he could have gone. The Empire State Building.

IX

We rode all the way to Battery Park, on the tip of Manhattan. We did not waste anytime. We dismounted our wave runners and swam the rest of the way to shore. From there, we sprinted to the nearest street and hailed the next taxi.

"Hey, can't ya see I'm on break? You wanna go to the Empire State Building? Forget about it. No way. Beat it. I ain't got time for this," the driver uttered.

Scar pulled out his pistol and tactfully replied with, "Well, I know in London, that it is much easier to take the tube, but we decided on livening up your pathetic excuse for a life. So would you kindly drive us or would you rather the Port Authority find your slimy carcass floating down the East River."

"Okay, okay. Get in. But I expect a pretty penny this," he said in shock.

"Ha ha, no. Step on it," Scar continued as he subtly grinned.

He meticulously maneuvered the cab through the Big Apple's traffic, carefully weaving between cars and pedestrians. A speeding taxi would not be anything foreign to the streets on New York, but a speeding taxi followed by a motorcade of black Ducatis is probably a first. Each engine roaring in the background, they surrounded the car, with a few on each side and a couple in the back. Each biker was equipped with a weapon of their own.

"Who the heck are you?! And why are they chasing us?!" the driver screamed.

"Just drive! Open the sunroof!" I yelled. I raised my body out of the port in the cab and drew my pistol. 8 shots left. 7 bikers on my tail. I had to make every shot count.

I deliberately aimed, shooting each rider down like clockwork. One after the other. Two shots left with one rider on my tail.

Bang. Miss. Bang. Miss.

X

A slight feeling of anguish rushed through my veins. I dropped the gun, knowing that it was of no use to me. It vanished into the myriad of cars slamming on the brakes and pedestrians that were completely perplexed and terrified.

The biker was still on my trail and did not seem to be giving up. He pumped more lead into the taxi than an amateur at a shooting range. He might as well been; he missed almost every single shot. Talk about bad aim. I was just hoping that this guy wouldn't get lucky. Honestly, I didn't want to take any chances, especially with thousands of lives at stake.

"Hey, I'll meet you guys there. I got some business to take care off," I exclaimed as the raucous of oncoming traffic attempted to drown out my voice.

"What the-" Scar interjected. But it was too late. I was already on the roof of the car.

I carefully calculated my jump. This timing had to be perfect in order to make a landing. My adrenaline levels peaked as I took my leap. Landing on the rider, I pursued the difficult task of controlling the motorcycle as I tried to dismount him.

Despite the lose of all of his colleagues, the man riding the motorcycle persevered in his mission to "remove" me, a quest that would be made in vain. My left hand tightly gripping ,I took the man buy his leather jacket and pushed him backwards. He flew backwards, barrel rolling off the top of a taxi and into the crowded streets.

I grabbed the other bar, stabilizing the motorcycle, and rushed towards the Empire State building. The cab with Scar was no where in sight, so I decided to rendezvous with them at the iconic building.

I accelerated my way to the building. Once there, I was quickly greeted with a firefight, Scar using his pistol and the cab driver flailing his arms all over, screaming obscenities and pleading for his life.

I reached for my gun, but then realized that I had thrown it somewhere in Lower Manhattan, a long way from here. It looked like I was going to have to resort to more eccentric methods. I drove straight into the hoard of minions. I mowed each one individually, as I had no means of protection. The ones that had enough sense dodge the black, turbo-charged bullet shooting through the array of them, quickly ran away in fear. I had a feeling they wouldn't be back anytime soon. As for the unlucky few that were too slow, I was fairly confident that they wouldn't be much of a problem either.

I scavenged for there weapons, certain that I would need them to make my way to the spire of the structure. Scar and I stood side by side as we hustled through the lobby making sure that we had taken care of everyone on the base level. I looked at the nearby elevators, then at the adjacent stairwell, and back again. I wasn't really in the mood to scale 102 floors, but my intuition told me that they had tampered with the elevators mechanisms. I would rather break a sweat climbing to the top of the tower than climbing to the pearly gates, or whatever awaited me. I needed to avenge Golfer.

We climbed flight after flight, step after step until we reached the summit. The only thing separating us from my revenge was a guard...and his legion of heavily armed sycophants. The narrow hallway served as the Thermopylae Pass in our battle. Scar and I were the 300 Spartans and the SOS agents were the thousands of Persians. We were vastly outnumbered, but in this hallway, numbers didn't account for anything.

I took two of the pistols I had found and started shooting. Each bullet making contact with the flesh of the nameless drones. Although their weapons exceeded in quality, their lack of aim made the playing field even. Before long, we had depleted their ranks, sparing no one.

I studied the corpses of the deceased, noticing the one thing they all had in commom. Each one had the trademark snake logo that I had seen so many times since my missiion began embroidered on a black armband and, leaving only the snakes green eyes and stripes visible. Under it, were the initials SOS. I knew I was getting close.

XI

From there, we made our way to the observation deck where Haddix was lounging on a prodigally decorated suede recliner and a device that seemed volatile enough blow up at any moment. The device oscillated on an axis and had light blue glow, similar to a globe-sized sun in between two reactors.

“Well,” Haddix began in his booming voice, “How did I know that you would be here. Well, you are too late. My device will blow any minute now. There is no way of stopping it. No abortions, self destructs, or postponements. It *will* detonate. Now if you excuse me, I will be going to see the results from Brooklyn.”

I put myself between the door and Haddix, blocking his only other escape. “No. You aren’t going anywhere. You are going to stay right here until you tell me what I want to know. I know I am Michael Wolfe and that I was supposed to kill you, but why didn’t you kill me when you had the chance. When we were on the boat?”

“Michael, how could I kill you? You are my creation. I genetically engineered you from a single cell. Have you ever wondered why you had electric blue eyes? That was a result of a malfunction in the process. You were supposed to look like me. You were supposed to be a younger, more improved duplicate of me. Remember the lab you woke up in? That was the very lab where you were developed. I never wanted you to betray me,” Haddix confessed.

I asked him how I ended up on the other side of crime spectrum, working for the government. He explained that the government had discovered the laboratory and that they had seized me and performed experiments on me. He convinced me that they had implanted wrongful memories of pain and suffering. He proceeded to tell me that they had lost my location when I was 25, after I had been on a raid to kill him. An explosion of a reactor in his lab caused me to black out and lose my memory. Slowly, he explained, I would regain my true memory.

That moment I had an epiphany. I had been lied to by the people I thought I could trust most. Golfer, the FBI, the government in general all developed a large conspiracy to prevent me from realizing my true identity. I had lived my whole life as a lie.

“Then why are you going to blow up the most iconic building in the world?” I questioned.

“To show the world that I am to be taken seriously and as revenge for the world taking everything from me. The SOS will make its mark on history. So tell me, will you join me?” he proposed.

I had considered the past few minutes, the past few days. If what he said was true, I could have my revenge against the world. If what he said was a complete lie, I would still have nothing to lose. After all, I had the two most powerful organizations after me. But something told me he wasn’t lying. The usually red hot eyes were a light amber, like what he was saying meant something. I accepted.

XII

“Well I’m sorry if I am ruining a family affair, but I believe that someone owes me money. I think we agreed at 100 million pounds,” Scar interjected, removing his midnight shades.

“I believe that you never completed your mission. You attempted to kill Wolfe after I specifically told you not to, and you have the audacity to ask for money? No. No money will be rewarded. Go rat us out to the FBI. Its not like they could do anything.”

With that, he shot Haddix in the leg, causing him to drop to the ground. I had no verbal reaction. I was in too much shock to say anything. I just unholstered my pistol. Taking out my anger, I unleashed a river of lead onto Scar, the current pushing him off the balcony of the observation deck. I could just imagine the headlines in the 5 o’clock news. *Wild Car Chase Through Manhattan. Massacre at the Empire State Building. Body Falls from New Heights.*

I hurried to Haddix’s side. The injury was far worse than it looked. It hit a major artery. He was coughing up blood. We both knew he wasn’t going to survive. He said to me, “Oppress the tyranny of today. Create a new world order tomorrow.” With that, his

body went limp.

Another black helicopter, this one with the SOS insignia, dropped a ladder from its hull. I climbed the ladder, grasping their former leaders corpse. Once aboard, I declared myself their new leader. The pilot, and what seemed to be other officials in the SOS submitted.

As we flew off, I looked back at the life I had left behind. I would never live a normal life ever again. I heard a large explosion. I peered out of the chopper, realizing the bomb had detonated. Its base and middle were full of blazing fire, spreading rapidly throughout the skyscraper.

The tallest building in the world, crumbled down, leaving nothing but burning rubble, screaming people, and ash sweeping through the air. I had probably seen the 9/11 attack on the news, but this felt a hundreds times worse. Smoke flowed through the air, the afterlife of a new beginning. It felt good watching it.

The collapse of the once mighty tower sealed my fate. From now, until the end of my life, I would have the world against me. It would be a constant struggle of wits. I may die, I may live. What will happen? Will this work for me? Challenge accepted.